

## 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

### GOSPEL

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Jesus told this parable to his disciples: "The kingdom of heaven will be like this: Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were sensible: the foolish ones did take their lamps, but they brought no oil, whereas the sensible ones took flasks of oil as well as their lamps. The bridegroom was late, and they all grew drowsy and fell asleep. But at midnight there was a cry, "The bridegroom is here! Go out and meet him."

At this, all those bridesmaids woke up and trimmed their lamps, and the foolish ones said to the sensible ones, "Give us some of your oil: our lamps are going out." But they replied, "There may not be enough for us and for you; you had better go to those who sell it and buy some for yourselves."

They had gone off to buy it when the bridegroom arrived. Those who were ready went in with him to the wedding hall and the door was closed. The other bridesmaids arrived later. "Lord! Lord!" they said, "open the door for us." But he replied, "I tell you solemnly, I do not know you."

So stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour.'

(Matthew 25:1-13)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- A solemn procession from the house of the bride's father to the house of the bridegroom was an important part of the Jewish wedding ceremony. These bridesmaids are a 'guard of honour' to greet the groom on his return with his bride. Sometimes problems with the marriage contract or the unhurried exchange of gifts between families led to long delays in their return.
- Jesus referred to himself as a bridegroom (Mark 2:19-20), and the Church is sometimes referred to as the bride of Christ.

### EXPLORING THE WORD

As the public ministry of Jesus draws to a close, Matthew introduces the themes of delay and the need to be ready for the second coming of Christ. Matthew's community were living in the 'in-between' times. Christ's victory over death through his resurrection had begun a new phase in history, but it was not yet complete. Completion would only come with his return in glory.

We again hear the familiar imagery of the messianic banquet or wedding feast to which all are invited. But only those who live with an attitude of openness and readiness will come into the great hall.

This parable speaks strongly of the need to live in the present with an eye to the future. We cannot live only for the 'now' with no thought for our ultimate goal, nor can we ignore the sufferings and responsibilities of the present and set our hearts only on heaven.

- How well do you balance the spiritual and practical realities of life?
- In what ways are you ready for Christ's coming in baptism?

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- The lamp oil represents those resources we have to meet the challenge of being ready: our actions, our faith, our service to others, our prayer, how much we have loved. It is not that the sensible virgins are being selfish; it is simply that this kind of oil—the way we live our lives—cannot be exchanged. We have to rely on our own resources to be ready.
- Think about the priorities in your own life. What are the activities that take up your time and energy? Are they the kinds of activities that prepare you to meet the bridegroom?
- Share stories of times when you put a great deal of effort into preparing for an occasion or an event. Did the preparation pay off?
- You might also remember times when you left things to chance or were unprepared. What was the result?
- Alternatively, you could ask how catechumens envisage their future and what preparations they are making now to ensure this vision becomes a reality. Do we only consider our financial or economic future?
- Pray these lines from Psalm 62 this week:

*O God, you are my God, for you I long;  
For you my soul is thirsting.*

Reflect on your own longing for God and your journey towards him.

